

George Washington to Charles Washington, January 31, 1770, The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799. John C. Fitzpatrick, Editor.

***To CHARLES WASHINGTON**

Mount Vernon, January 31, 1770.

Dr. Charles: If you saw my Brother John in Stafford when you were down there at Christmas; if you had any Conversation with my Br. Sam'l on the Subject I mentioned to you; and if any time was proposed for your meeting at this place, I should be glad to know it, and beg you will write me a line by the first Post after this gets to hand informing me of it accordingly; as I want to prepare for my journey but am desirous before hand of knowing whether I am to go alone or in Company as it will make some difference in my preparation's.

As I expect it will shortly be known, whether the Officers and Soldiers under the Kings Proclamation have any chance to come in for Lands West of the Alligany Mountains, I should be glad to know if any of them which may fall in your way woud sell their rights; and upon what terms; tho' I have little expectations that any of them woud sell upon such terms as I woud buy, or any person coud afford to buy, unless they warranted the Lands; For if the number of Grants (which are of older date to the King's Proclamation) should take place, as their is but too much reason to apprehend, if they do not by clashing with each other, destroy themselves; I woud hardly give any Officer a button for his Right; for besides a large Tract of Country reserved for the Indian Traders, from Fort Pitt near 150 Miles down the Ohio, and up to the Laurell Hills there appeard by a List laid before the House of Burgesses by order of the Govt. to be between 6 and 7,000,000 of acres actually granted

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and Petitioned for; and most of the Grants made in such general, and indeterminate terms, that if confirmd no man can lay off a foot of Land and be sure of keeping it, till they are servd.

Upon my shewing Mr. Thurstonn¹ (who was formerly a Lieutt. and thereby entitled to 2,000 Acres of Land) a Copy of the Grants, and proceedings of the House of Burgesses thereupon, he immediately sold his right (tho otherwise very fond of it) to Lund Washington for Ten pounds. Now could I purchase 12 or 15,000 Acres upon the same terms, I would do it, considering of it as a Lottery only; and my Reason's for so doing are these. Such a quantity of Land as this, added to what I may expect in my own Right, would form a Tract of so great dignity as to render it worth my while to send out a Person for the discovery of Land, clear if possible of these numerous grants; and to be at some expence and trouble in seating and Saving it; for without this the Land would soon be forfeited (which I believe will be the case with half the Officers in this Colony) if they should actually obtain the Land; and again, it would be worth my while thus situated, to buy of some who might under their Grants think I clash'd with them.

Upon the whole, as you are situated in a good place for seeing many of the Officers at different times, I should be glad if you would (in a joking way, rather than in earnest, at first) see what value they seem to set upon their Lands; and if you can buy any of the Rights of those who continued in the Service till after the Cherokee Expedition, at the Rate of about five, Six, or Seven pounds a thousand acres I shall be obliged to you, and will pay the money upon demand. I am of opinion that Chew, and some of those who may be in want of a little ready money, would gladly sell; nor is it much to be wondered at if they should, for if those large Grants which I have already mentiond should take place the purchaser will have sunk so much money to very little purpose; nor is the Officer's right under the Proclamation of any consequence to those who either does not resolve to go after the Land himself, or employ others to do it for him; the first I do not suppose many are inclin'd to, the last is hardly worth the expence for small tracts; and the Officer is as much obliged

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to find the Land as any other individual; nor is his Title, if he be not entitled to some degree of preference, a jot better than any other Man's who will go in pursuit of Lands himself, except that he is to enjoy it 10 years free of Quit rents.

If you should make any purchases, let it be done in your own name, for reason's I shall give you when we meet; take Bonds in large Penalties to convey all their Rights under the Kings Proclamation to you; and they should be obligd to suffer their names to be made use of to obtain the Land, as the Kings Proclamation requires a Personal application to the Govnr. and Council in order to entitle them to the Respective quantities granted. In looking over the List of Grants that were laid before the Ho. of Burgesses I perceivd one for 10,000 Acres to a certain Ambrose Powell (who I believe lives in Culpeper County) lying above the Mouth of the great Kanhaway; this is comprehended within our Grant of 200,000 Acres, it is also fixed at a place where two or three other Grants are laid and I believe some of them older; but yet, as it lyes in the way of a scheme I have in view; and woud, in some small degree promote my Plan if I had it, I should be obligd to you if you woud enquire in a round about way who this Powell is and where he lives &ca., and tell me who you think the most likely person for me to employ to purchase his right to the Grant. You need not let your reasons for enquiring after Powell be known, till you have given me what information you can concerning him, least it may give him or others cause to imagine that his grant is more valuable than it really is: In fact, I do not think that it is intrinsically worth a groat (tho I woud give eight or Ten pounds for it, If I could not get it for less) inasmuch as it is totally swallowed up in other Grants; but several of this sort may in some measure give me a prior claim to have my share of the 200,000 Acres above the Mouth of the Gr. Kanhaway where I am told the land is very fine, it is for this reason therefore I would [²] a little for Powell's.

In the whole of your transactions, either with the Officers, or on this other matter; do not let it be known that I have any concern therein. I have Inclosd you a copy of the Bond I drew from Thruston to Lund Washington, which will serve you for a Precedent in case you

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shoud make any purchases. I have put your name in the place of Lund Washington's, as I woud have the title given to you, and not to me, till matters are riper than they appear to be at present. I shall take care to furnish you with money as you may find occasion to compleat the quantity I have mentioned. Show no part of this Letter, so that you can be drawn into no trouble or difficulty in the Affair. In the mean time I shoud be glad if you would write to me fully by the first post after this gets to hand. I am, etc.

P.S. Inclosd you will receive 30/ to pay the within Acct. of James Browns, tho I think it is a most enormous charge as I shoud be glad you woud tell him.

¹Charles Mynn Thruston. Later he was a colonel in the ¹ontinental Army.
²utilated in manuscript.